

CJTF-HOA tests new emergency procedures

Story and Photo by Cpl. Adam C. Schnell

CAMP LEMONIER, Djibouti – Personnel with Marine Corps Central Command-Djibouti, along with French and Kellogg, Brown and Root fire-fighting units, participated in a flight line emergency drill here Feb. 28.

The drill, meant to test out new emergency procedures, also incorporated support from a local French crash, fire and rescue unit to better respond quickly in case of an actual major emergency.

For this drill, the newly arrived Expeditionary Medical Unit, and French and KBR firefighters arrived on the scene of a simulated helicopter crash with four injured people aboard. The goal was to get help to the wounded as quickly as possible in a safe manner.

To do this, the two fire-fighting units combined efforts to distinguish the simulated flames. Once the fire was under control, the firefighters began to pull the four wounded service members from the wreckage and carried them to a safe spot where personnel from the EMU started stabilizing the wounded, who suffered from burns and broken bones.

"We just want to 'scoop' them and bring them back to the EMU where they can be treated better," said Lt. Cedric L. West, staff nurse for the outgoing EMU and a coordinator of the drill.

West, a Lithonia, Ga., native, said that for the incoming EMU, this drill was their first test since arriving about a week ago. For some, the drill was an eye-opener.

"This was my first mass casualty drill since being attached to Fleet Hospital Jacksonville," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Chris A. Golden, an ambulance control coordinator for the EMU and Greenville, S.C., native. "It opened our eyes to what could be done better next time."

In the end, the drill was claimed a

huge success, said King, a St. Simons, Ga. native. But with every drill, a major key is to also identify areas for improvement and address them.

Another key that made the drill a success was co-training with the French crash, fire and rescue unit for the first time. The drill was a great starting point for future drills with different scenarios, said King.

With more training in the near future, Jeff S. Mangel, fire chief for the KBR Fire Dept.-Camp Lemonier said the drills will run progressively smoother the more exercises are done with the French firefighters.

"It's like putting a puzzle together," said the Syracuse, N.Y., native. "It takes time to put all the pieces in place."

One of the biggest problems was communication. The language barrier played a small part in the problem, but more significant was not having a standard method of operating between KBR and French fire-fighting units.

"We need to work together more often so we can validate one procedure," said French Sgt. Maj. Charley Gorely, fire chief for the BA 188 crash, fire and rescue unit. "The more we train together, the more lives we might save in the end."

To respond quickly, a chain of events must take place. First, the Marcent Quarterdeck receives the emergency call and fills out the in-flight ground emergency checklist.

Second, the message is relayed via the "Bat Phone" to other units on the base.

The "Bat Phone," named because of its purpose in emergency situations, is a telephone hooked to a special line that reaches links to all emergency responders as soon as the phone is picked up.

If the command duty officer feels that other assistance is necessary, the French Air Base 188 is called. Working along with the only French mili-

tary fire-fighting unit in the area provides an added asset that can be deployed if necessary, said Marine Capt. Adam M. King, assistant operations officer of Marcent-Djibouti.

With the new emergency procedures now proven effective, re-

sponders are able to correct problems in simulations so personnel are safer in the future.

"This time it was only a drill," said Gorely, a 32-year veteran of firefighting. "Next time it might be the real thing."



Medical personnel for the Expeditionary Medical Unit watch as Lt. Kerri L. Browne, a triage officer, cares for a patient during a simulated helicopter crash here Feb. 28. The mass casualty drill was held to test new emergency procedures and provide training to the newly-arrived EMU personnel.

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Cover photo by Cpl. Adam C. Schnell

Army 1st Lt. Amy K. Peterson-Colwell, staff veterinarian for the civic action team, reaches to

grab a goat to receive medicine during a Veterinarian Civic Action Program here Feb. 29.

Table of Content

News.....Page 2-5

Chapel Schedule.....Page 6

MWR Events.....Page 7

Troop of the Week....Page 7